



## THE BUREAUCRATIC GRIP OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES

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**Abstract:** European University Alliances (EUAs) are key instruments in the European Union's strategy for higher education integration. Funded primarily through Erasmus+ and Horizon2020. These alliances aim to enhance academic mobility, promote transnational collaboration, and foster curriculum innovation. However, despite their ambitious goals, EUAs face bureaucratic complexities that may hinder their long-term sustainability. This paper explores the governance structures of these alliances, analysing the role of bureaucratic mechanisms in shaping institutional dynamics. It also examines how digitalisation and curricular mobility present *a window of opportunity* for overcoming administrative barriers. By assessing the impact of EU policies, funding frameworks, and institutional practices, we argue that while EUAs offer a promising model for higher education cooperation, their long-term viability depends on streamlined governance and strategic policy support.

**Keywords:** European University Alliances, bureaucracy, academic mobility, governance, digitalization

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The governance of European University Alliances (EUI) is fragmented and lacks a standardised model, posing a significant challenge to their long-term sustainability and institutional integration. Next to the university's bureaucracy, new was added with the Alliance creation and participation in Erasmus+ and even more – Horizon2020 SwafS project for creation of joint research management within the Alliances. Despite financial support and strategic direction from the European Commission, bureaucratic rigidity and regulatory discrepancies among member states create barriers to effective cooperation. These challenges hinder the development of joint curricula, restrict the seamless mobility of students and staff, and complicate resource sharing among institutions.

Additionally, different governance frameworks might raise concerns about the long-term viability of the EUI initiative, as alliances struggle to transition from project-based collaborations to sustainable institutional networks. This paper examines how different governing structures, projects, outcomes, reports and similar might cause bureaucracy and what

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is “the window of opportunity”. The paper explores potential strategies to enhance institutional collaboration, ensure regulatory alignment, and foster deeper academic integration.

Over the past decades, the European Union (EU) has pursued an ambitious institutional agenda centred on regional integration, with mobility emerging as a fundamental pillar of supranational initiatives across various sectors, particularly in education. This focus spans all levels of education, from primary to higher education, the latter playing a crucial role in advancing European integration. To support this vision, several supranational public education policies and bureaucratic frameworks have been implemented through a series of structured programs over the decades. The Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999, was an example of a decisive milestone in the evolution of this entire policy agenda. It laid the groundwork for creating and consolidating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), aiming to promote student mobility and integrate higher education systems across Europe. The implementation of the Erasmus Programme in 1987 had already been a significant step toward facilitating academic mobility among European countries. However, the Bologna Process and its subsequent reforms provided a more structured framework to ensure diploma recognition, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and the development of a more cohesive and comparable higher education landscape.

The policies, programs, and bureaucracies mentioned enabled European Higher Education Institutions to form extensive networks, known as European Universities Alliances (EUA), which started as the European Universities Initiative (EUI) in 2019. The decision to support the creation of alliances was made at the 2017 Gothenburg Summit. However, the idea of strengthening cooperation among European universities had already gained traction before the official launch of the initiative in the Alpine winds. One of the most pivotal moments in this process was French President Emmanuel Macron’s speech at Sorbonne University in 2017. His address not only underscored the strategic importance of academic collaboration across borders but also positioned the EUIs as a central element of the European integration agenda. Macron’s vision extended beyond diploma recognition; he emphasised the need to forge a shared European identity among students and institutions, grounded in academic mobility and transnational cooperation. Macron’s broader vision of a European academic space that strengthens identity and mobility was the European Universities Initiative, which was conceived as a comprehensive internationalisation strategy led by the European Commission, aiming to integrate teaching, research, and civic engagement within transnational alliances (Rensimer & Brooks, 2024). More than just a financial investment, however, the initiative represents a shift in how European universities conceive mobility and academic cooperation. Rather than treating internationalisation as a set of isolated mobility experiences, the EUI promotes curricular integration and institutional interconnectedness, reinforcing the idea that mobility is not merely a movement of people but also of knowledge, pedagogical practices, and institutional policies (Rensimer & Brooks, 2024, p.2).

Since 2019, the EU has supported and financially promoted the EUI initiative, which by 2024 resulted in the formation and operation of 65 European universities involving more than 570 higher education institutions (*Observatory of EU Alliances*, n.d.). According to official data, there were 2,692 recognised higher education institutions in Europe in 2024, meaning that 20% of European higher education institutions are involved in the European University Alliances (Mazajnet, n.d.; *Universities in Europe*, n.d.). This initiative has not only strengthened institutional collaboration but also significantly enhanced academic mobility and curriculum integration across borders. By fostering interconnected networks of higher education institutions, it has provided an innovative and dynamic platform for scientific research, transnational learning experiences, and joint degree development. The initiative has

particularly attracted researchers in the social sciences, driven both by substantial financial support for alliance-building and by the structured funding mechanisms underlying the process.

The European Universities alliances were created by three key EU funding phases: 2019 (17 Alliances), 2020 (24 Alliances), and 2024 (14 Alliances). European Commission supported the creation of three major pillars: long-term joint strategy, European inter-university campuses, and Knowledge-creating teams with the Erasmus+ funding programme. Not stopping on that, the European Commission offered a more competitive call for establishing research management tools with Horizon2020 Science with and for Society financial instrument. These funding periods have allowed European higher education institutions to reflect on the advantages and challenges of forming Alliances and to apply for membership accordingly. This period has not only sustained but also increased interest in building Alliances. However, not all proposed Alliances have received EU approval, even after multiple applications. European universities within these Alliances are expected to develop and implement an integrated, long-term education strategy linked to research and innovation, to benefit society as a whole. To achieve their objectives, the EU envisions these Alliances operating under common governance structures and shared resource pools, including human resources, data, services, joint administration, and infrastructure.

Through this cooperation, the Alliances could address longstanding challenges, such as creating joint curricula more easily, enhancing high-quality inclusive education, research, and innovation, while aligning with the digital and ecological transitions of the current era. Deep institutional cooperation within the European University Alliances allows students, doctoral candidates, and staff to take advantage of opportunities for seamless mobility across so-called European university campuses. According to the European Union's vision, people can learn, teach, conduct research, work, and share services in any institution of an alliance partner, whether physically, *online*, or through hybrid formats. This seamless mobility is sought at all levels of study, with the ambitious goal of ensuring that at least 50% of the students in an alliance benefit from it.

*“Three “key elements” were developed to indicate what is expected from successful alliances by 2025. The first includes, firstly, a shared, integrated, and long-term joint strategy for education, with connections to research, innovation, and society at large; secondly, an “interuniversity” European higher education campus, where all students and staff can move seamlessly (physically or virtually) between any of the partner institutions that have incorporated mobility at all levels and offer new joint and flexible curricula; and finally, European knowledge creation teams made up of students, academics, and other relevant stakeholders for the alliances, aimed at addressing social challenges and other issues in a multidisciplinary way.” (GUNN, 2020, p.18)*

As part of the work process, Alliances must develop common, flexible learning programmes based on an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, integrating student-centred teaching and innovative pedagogy. The EU has committed to examining the creation of a *European Higher Education Degree*, based on jointly developed European criteria at national, regional, and institutional levels. This collaborative framework seeks to challenge bureaucratic elements and foster closer institutional cooperation, promoting innovative and inclusive education across participating institutions. While these ambitions are significant, the long-term sustainability of the Alliances remains an open question. The EU has primarily provided financial incentives such as Erasmus+ funding for establishing Alliances and additional support through the Horizon2020 program for scientific management, while leaving the question of long-term continuity to the independent governance of the institutions involved.

Also, the context of emerging Alliances does not have standardised requirements for a management model, so governing models differ in alliances. In addition, a small part of the alliances have legally authorised their activities. Others still operate as an informal network for project-oriented activities, which, according to scientists, has almost no institutional entrenchment and social impact (Kallinikos, 2003). Getting out of the framework of project activities and acting as a sustainable alliance requires financial and human resources. It is precisely that going beyond project activities and moving on to a permanent joint activity in which sustainable processes prevail is a sign of the sustainability of university alliances. However, this is not the only parameter that indicates the sustainability of European University Alliances.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach based on document analysis, open data, and participatory observation to examine the bureaucratic structures and governance models of European University Alliances. The research methodology includes the analysis of institutional documents, official reports to the European Commission, guidelines from Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 SwafS call. In addition, the research presents a case study of the EU-CONEXUS alliance from the observer position by working directly at the alliance level, the decision-making body. The observation of the EU-CONEXUS alliance extends to other Alliances, comparing their structures, experience and results with the SwafS project declared in various conferences, roundtables, workshops and official outlines of the project results. A comprehensive systematic literature review was made for the content analysis and conceptualisation of academic studies related to university governance, higher education internationalisation, institutional bureaucracy, and EU education policies. To frame this analysis, the study applies Weber’s bureaucracy theory and Kingdon’s (2003) "window of opportunity" framework, assessing how alliances can strategically adapt their governance models to enhance efficiency. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify key challenges and opportunities in the governance of European University Alliances, which will be further explored in the paper.

*Table 1. Research Methodology Overview (Source: Created by the authors, 2025)*

<b>Methodological Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Qualitative Approach</b>	Combines document analysis, open data, and participatory observation.
<b>Institutional Document Analysis</b>	Examines reports to the European Commission, Horizon2020 project call guidelines, and SwafS project documents.
<b>Participatory Observation</b>	Involves direct engagement in EU-CONEXUS decision-making coordination bodies and direct management of SwafS projects.
<b>Comparative Analysis</b>	Assesses bureaucracy through the documentation of projects and mobility schemes, as well as governance structures that may influence the rise or fall of bureaucratic influence. Comparing alliances with the SwafS experience, assuming it might cause bureaucratic growth.
<b>Public Policy Framework</b>	Applies Weber’s bureaucracy theory and Kingdon’s "window of opportunity" framework to evaluate governance strategies for reducing bureaucracy.
<b>Policy and Governance Evaluation</b>	Analyses how alliances navigate bureaucratic complexities and leverage policies to sustain and integrate into the EUA market.

*Theoretical Framework*

This analysis is based on Weber’s bureaucracy theory and Kingdon’s (2003) "window of opportunity" framework to assess how university alliances can leverage the political and institutional context to advance their objectives. The governance of these alliances is examined through the lens of decision-making structures, interinstitutional coordination mechanisms, and the challenges imposed by the diversity of national higher education systems.

*Table 2. Theoretical Framework Overview (Source: Created by the authors, 2025)*

<b>Theoretical Approach</b>	<b>Key Concepts</b>	<b>Application to EUI Governance</b>
<b>Weber’s Bureaucracy Theory</b>	Hierarchical structures, formalised rules, efficiency vs. rigidity	Examines how bureaucratic governance influences decision-making and operational efficiency within EUI
<b>Kingdon’s Window of Opportunity Framework</b>	Problem stream, policy stream, political stream	Identifies critical moments when policy changes can be implemented to improve alliance governance and integration

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. The Role of Horizon 2020 (SwafS) in the Development of Alliances**

European University Alliances, alongside their role in pooling studies under the Erasmus+ programme, were also invited to benefit from specialised Horizon2020 funding. This funding aimed to support the development and implementation of governance structures within these alliances, with a specific focus on managing scientific activities. An example of such an initiative is SwafS - Science with and for Society, launched as part of Horizon 2020, which funded 22 projects of the EUAs under the IBA-SwafS-SUPPORT-2-2020 call, complementing the Erasmus+ actions to strengthen institutional changes within the alliances, as presented in the Report on Good Practices from European University Alliances Projects (Pilot II), published in 2024.

One of the main focuses of SwafS within the Alliances was the development of a common research and innovation (R&I) agenda, strengthening transnational collaboration between higher education institutions. The alliances sought to map and share their research capacities, develop joint structures, and integrate open science into their academic practice. Its operationalisation within EUIs enabled institutions to develop robust regulatory frameworks, data governance mechanisms, and policies fostering responsible research and innovation. Some of the key areas, bureaucracies, and innovations that the EUIs can develop through SwafS may include:

- Strengthen governance structures to support responsible research and innovation, ensuring collaboration between institutions, policymakers, and industry;
- Enhance academic mobility through initiatives which facilitate researcher exchanges, international cooperation, and career development;
- Promote digital transformation in research and education, enabling open access, innovative publishing, and interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Support curriculum reform to better equip students with interdisciplinary skills and align educational programs with industry needs;

- Expand access to knowledge and training through MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and other digital learning platforms;
- Encourage participation in Digital Projects, leveraging IT-based interaction to strengthen engagement between researchers, institutions, and society;
- Facilitate physical, virtual, and hybrid exchange models to offer flexible and inclusive international learning experiences;

To integrate these elements effectively, governance mechanisms must balance efficiency with flexibility. SwafS provides guidelines for structuring research collaboration, data management, and institutional policy alignment, offering a pathway to streamlined but effective administration. These frameworks present a unique opportunity for alliances to reduce unnecessary red tape while enhancing scientific integrity and cross-border cooperation. The SwafS project in alliances concluded in late 2023 and early 2024, resulting in an extensive collection of outputs, including best practices, guides, strategic frameworks, collections of various fields good practices, financial and administrative guidelines, feasibility studies, and policy recommendations, as presented in their reports. This initiative represents a significant step forward in developing robust scientific and administrative management tools for university alliances. However, the challenge now lies in determining the fate of these carefully crafted documents and procedures. Will they become indispensable tools for innovation and efficiency, or will they be buried under layers of bureaucracy? As Weber's theory of bureaucracy, revisited by Ferreira and Serpa (2019), suggests, rigid bureaucratic structures can sometimes hinder progress. The task ahead is to ensure that these governance frameworks serve as catalysts for meaningful collaboration rather than barriers to innovation in the European academic landscape.

### **3.2. Governance & Bureaucracy**

The Bureaucracy of the European Union ensures the implementation of standard policies and coordinates the policies of the (alliances) Member States. This often includes the interaction of national administrations with the European Union, as it will become a state apparatus (Mike, 2005). The integrated perspective shows that the European Union and the interested parties, e.g. European University Alliances, by acting the top-down and bottom-up processes, are calling for each other to change and strengthen each other's administrations, which in turn become more influential actors in the European Union. (Bach & Ruffing, 2017). The lack of administrative capacity and the interest in eliminating these shortcomings strongly impact the organisational structure and its adaptation to a superior apparatus. The advantage can likely be understood differently by countries, and alliances are likely to emerge in the alliances' totality, which consider themselves to be superior to the coordinating governing and administrative apparatus of the European Union and will choose the governance structure of the alliance independently of the logical development of the coordinating body, the European Commission. If we experience it, we will see alliances with different governance structures.

In M. Weber's model of bureaucracy, an ideal organisation has a clear hierarchical multi-level structure, usually with top-down management, where the higher layers of government oversee the lower layers of the hierarchical management structure. Our study of the publicly available governing structure schemes of the alliances leads us to conclude that those alliances that have formed a graphical representation of their alliance management structure belong to the hierarchical management category. This conclusion was brought to us because the top level of alliance governance is the European Commission (in case of project-oriented alliances) or the Collegial body (Governing board, Assembly, etc.). At the same time, these alliances establish a clear division of labour, where the tasks, responsibilities and roles are clearly defined

and assigned to specific positions within the alliance. Such management increases efficiency and productivity since it allows individuals to focus on their area of competence, but at the same time, requires a detailed description of the work or order of activity of each organ (collegial or sole) with an indication of the sphere of activity of the organ, competencies, responsibilities, deadlines for decision-making and many other nuances. This information is not publicly available on alliance websites. If it is provided, it is to a small extent. Hence, it is unclear whether or not there is a detailed documented regulation of each government/management body within the alliances.

Alliances' most common hierarchical governing structures start with a top management body consisting of university rectors (governing board) or a general meeting, like a General Assembly, to which all the alliance's managers are invited (*European Universities Initiative - Outcomes and Transformational Potential*, 2025). Followed by either a steering committee, a scientific/research council, and/or an academic council consisting of vice-rectors in the relevant field, respectively. Regardless of the hierarchical structure, the student council and the external advisory board often freely function (*European Universities Initiative - Outcomes and Transformational Potential*, 2025). However, more interesting governing structures are detected during open data analysis. Some of the alliances are put on the top-level government of the European Commission, showing their project-oriented and EC funding dependability. Minor Alliances showed flat or other types of management structures.

The European Universities Association's analysis of the governance structures of EU alliances refines the sustainability of some alliances by identifying the change from the perspective of project management to sustainable co-working as a network of organisations.

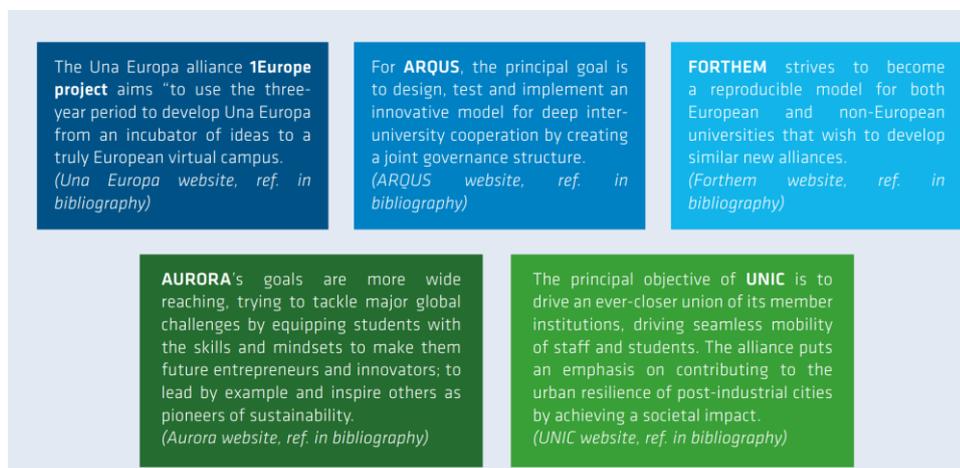


Figure 1. From project governance to sustainable collaborative governance (Esterman, 2021)

Projects and project management are often treated as a new, post-bureaucratic organisational form without separating the general perception of bureaucracy from the task being performed. The general approach to bureaucracy seems more harmful than a specific perception of bureaucracy, which can be both a nuisance and an auxiliary tool in the implementation of the project (Ologeanu-Taddei, 2020). The experience of project managers, the institutional situation and the proportion of administrative tasks in the project determine the extent to which bureaucracy is perceived as bureaucracy (Vento & Kuokkanen, 2020). While project management implies flexibility and innovation, it also includes bureaucracy, which usually affects less experienced project managers.

The EUI have incorporated the internationalization agenda of higher education within the European Union framework, where these dimensions can be visualized and understood through bureaucratic procedures and implementation processes, particularly in projects within the scope of Internationalization at Home (IaH). According to Gunn (2020), "(..) we can see how the EUI has the potential to be a driver of IaH, not only through curriculum reform and the promotion of foreign language learning but also by bringing international experiences to the local campus through virtual means." (2020, p.26). These processes reflect an institutional effort to develop international strategies, including administrative frameworks, policies, and programs that support student mobility and curriculum internationalization.

However, beyond the internal institutional dimension, bureaucratic structures and discussions extend into the political and governmental arena, where administrative rigidity becomes more pronounced, influencing the development realities of the alliances. The intersection between institutional flexibility and governmental rigidity shapes the bureaucratic landscape of these alliances, highlighting the complexities of multi-level governance in international education. This transition from institutional (at home) to governmental bureaucracy underscores the importance of governance instruments within the alliances, as well as project management tools and the elaboration of structured processes and documents. These governance instruments include steering committees, decision-making bodies, and quality assurance frameworks that regulate the alliances' activities, ensuring that projects align with the broader European education policy. The following example illustrates how these governance mechanisms, project management strategies, and document development procedures function within European higher education projects.

For example, in the European Universities Alliance EU-CONEXUS, the vast majority of documents are created during project activities or are influenced by certain activities related to project activities that need to be documented. If the document is created during project activities, then this is done in a specific work package, most often consisting of at least one person from all partner universities.

The work packages themselves always have a thematic focus, and even at the beginning of the development of the project, they have an assigned leading partner of the university who feels either that he is a leader in this field or seeks to make the most significant impact on the alliance in a particular area, or wants to hold in his hands an essential mission for him. In the work packages, representatives of universities are appointed according to the activities carried out in that package and the competencies necessary for it, so it can be said that the executive branch of universities trusts the appointed candidates and the products they create in a specific work package. The document drawn up in the work package is submitted for qualitative assessment. Depending on the project, the qualitative evaluation can be carried out by the project manager (if he has the appropriate competencies), the executive director of the alliance with a doctorate rank, or sent directly to the Research Council for a qualitative assessment. When all the corrections proposed during the qualitative assessment are made, the document is considered at a meeting of the Research Council, which is usually carried out using a remote meeting or during a written procedure. If the document is specifically related only to an academic issue, the consideration takes place in the Academic Council. Suppose the document is a political-level document after a qualitative assessment by the Research Council. In that case, it is always forwarded for approval to the Governing Board, which consists exclusively of the rectors of universities. The approved document goes back to the project manager for formal covering and submission to the European Commission Project Management Portal. After approval by the European Commission, the document is freely findable.



Figure 2. EU-CONEXUS alliance governance model (Source: EU-CONEXUS, 2022)

All of the Alliance's collegial governing bodies have established and approved rules of procedure, which, according to Weber, ensures consistency and predictability. These rules of procedure are drawn up within the framework of the SwafS project, as well as the optimisation of the management structure, which will leave a positive mark on the documentation processing in the long term. The period of qualitative verification of documents of one of the collegial management bodies is 2 weeks, and their meetings are held monthly, which allows you to quickly and effectively respond to new challenges.

The meetings of the governing bodies are recorded in writing, which, according to Weber, creates a large number of documents. Even if they were recorded in audio/video format, it would not change the game because virtual documents also need cloud space for saving, which is not unlimited and might cost a lot if there are a lot of saved recordings. European University Alliances, acting within the project framework, comply with the conditions dictated by the European Union, which means that the project activities have Data Management Plans (DMP). They define how documents and data are used, stored, and managed (including after the end of the project), helping to assess the sustainability of documentation and access to it. This aligns with FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

Some documents, such as sets of good practices, reports, etc., do not intend to be constantly used by their nature, so they lie down in the registers as project documents. If there was no change of managerial personnel in alliances, and project managers remained in the activities of partnerships, the secondary use of documents would be much more frequent. Since this is not the case, since the managerial staff is changing, those newly involved in the activities of the Alliance do not know about the existence of already created documents and begin to do the same or similar work that has already been done. On the one hand, a different person has different perspectives, so there are no two identical documents on the same topic; on the other hand, the content of the previous document is likely to be outdated since, at present, in the abundance of such information, the written nomenclature is ageing lightning fast.

It is essential to mention that the collegial governing bodies of the Alliance are vice-rectors, rectors, and managers who work intensively in the activities of the university and often do not have time to carefully read and examine the documents of massively compiled project activities of which there are at least a few every month, and the deadline for their review is only 2 weeks. The approval of documents by a collegial body usually makes a formal gesture that demonstrates the unity of the Alliance, which has little to do with the genuine intention - to control the necessity and quality of the appearance of documents. However, the essential documents for the Alliance have received more attention and discussion. In the EU-CONEXUS Alliance, responsibility is shared, and control is mainly exercised by one person – the Alliance's executive director, who is employed by a leading university and is hired to act exclusively for

the sake of the Alliance. Such a system of document resource management is quite effective since it does not create obstacles to a quick response to changes. On the other hand, heuristic or approving decision-making tactics prevail, which can be either inefficient or harmful (Hunt et al., 2024). That is why it is not recommended to rely on one person's opinion and to engage more people in the decision-making procedure.

The Alliance continues to be dominated by project activities as the Alliance's primary source of funding, and project activities continue to be dominated by document preparation and validation in the developed management apparatus. Other projects will likely be less documented, or the documents will be more project-based than those focused on alliance formation activities and policies. We want to believe that the Alliance's management documents developed during the SwafS project will be sufficient and will not create the inertia to continue documenting everything, which would lead to red-tape and disrupt the Alliance's strategic manoeuvring, innovation and response to the needs of the academic and scientific communities. In 2024, the European Union promoted the creation of a community of practice for European University Alliances at the invitation of Erasmus+. This call aims to make the cross-cultural community of the alliances work more closely, exchange good practices, carry out coordinated dissemination activities in the broader higher education sector and thus become a full-fledged European university. This project will undoubtedly create even more sets of "good practices" to help improve intercultural governance. Still, it will depend on each Alliance individually and the European Commission on top of it on how they use these documents in their activities.

### **3.3. Bureaucracy, Window of Opportunity, and Mobility**

The window of opportunity concept, developed by Kingdon (2003), provides a useful lens to examine the bureaucratic evolution of European University Alliances. Kingdon argues that policies emerge and gain traction when three elements align: recognised problems, viable solutions, and political momentum. In the case of university alliances, the growing need for academic mobility and digitalisation has created an environment conducive to policy reforms that could enhance governance efficiency.

However, the implementation of full curricular mobility continues to face bureaucratic hurdles, particularly regarding credit recognition, diploma validation, and administrative coordination across different national regulatory frameworks. From a Weberian perspective, bureaucracy is essential for ensuring consistency and accountability in governance. Yet, when it becomes excessively rigid, it may obstruct rather than facilitate institutional cooperation. The alliances must, therefore, navigate the delicate balance between necessary bureaucratic structures and the flexibility required for innovation.

The creation of a European Higher Education Degree could represent a pivotal moment in reducing bureaucratic barriers, allowing students to move seamlessly across institutions without the administrative burden of individualised credit validation. Similarly, digitalisation offers another potential breakthrough, as virtual mobility programs and shared e-learning platforms could facilitate academic integration without the logistical complexities of physical relocation. This could also provide the emergence of a new model for curricular internationalisation within alliances, based on "curricular mobility" as a potential opportunity. Nonetheless, these transformations require policy alignment at both the European Union (EU) and national levels, ensuring that alliances can operate within a streamlined yet effective regulatory framework.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

European University Alliances represent a significant step forward in the EU's educational integration but still face bureaucratic challenges that may hinder their efficiency and sustainability.

EU funding, through Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, has played a crucial role in structuring and consolidating these alliances; however, the transition to a self-sustaining model remains uncertain.

Governance structures within alliances vary significantly, ranging from hierarchical frameworks to more flexible models, which affects their ability to foster innovation and curriculum integration.

Digitalization and curricular mobility present a window of opportunity to minimise bureaucratic obstacles and enhance the impact of these alliances, yet they require further structuring and dedicated policy support.

The long-term sustainability of these alliances beyond EU funding cycles depends on the development of resilient governance mechanisms and the implementation of public policies that ensure their continuity.

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